Character Education in Exploring

In the Learning for Life program, you will hear the belief in experiential learning and the values and ethical principles that this kind of learning seeks to promote being referred to as character education. The following are the key components of character education in Exploring.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCES

Exploring is experiential learning with lots of fun-filled, hands-on activities. It promotes the conditions necessary for the growth and development of adolescent youth. (This is illustrated in the *Explorer Leader Handbook,* No. 34637A.)

Young people need experiences that allow them to

1. Interact with peers and acquire a sense of belonging
2. Gain experiences in decision making
3. Discuss conflicting values and formulate their own value systems
4. Reflect on self in relation to others and discover more about themselves by interaction
5. Experiment with their own identity
6. Participate as a responsible member of a group
7. Cultivate a capacity to enjoy life

Exploring can provide these experiences in wholesome, well-planned programs run by post members.

(Conditions for growth described in Requirements for Health Development of Adolescent Youth *by Gisela Konopka.)*

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

The way young people learn to reason about and solve problems and make choices will stay with them the rest of their lives. Explorer Advisors can do a great deal to help the youth in posts learn a simple decision-making process that can help them make choices and resolve problems. (See the *Explorer Leader Handbook,* No. 34637A, and *Character Education Activities,* No. 99-223.)

Explorers can use this practical three-step process to solve problems:

1. *Empathy.* Put yourself in the other person's place.
2. *Invention.* Invent as many solutions to the problem as you can, without trying to decide which is best.
3. *Selection.* List the advantages and disadvantages of each option and then select the one that comes closest to meeting the needs of everyone involved.

Initiative Games

Initiative games are fun, cooperative, challenging games in which the group is confronted with a specific problem to solve. In Exploring we use initiative games for two reasons. First, initiative games demonstrate and teach leadership skills, which help to promote the growth of Explorers. Second, initiative games demonstrate a process of thinking about experiences that helps Explorers learn and become responsible citizens.

Here are a few suggestions for conducting the games:

1. Begin by clearly explaining the game.
2. Don't offer ideas for solving the problem.
3. Reflect on the activity. Spend a few minutes afterward talking with the Explorers about what they learned.

Below is a list of games you can get from the *Explorer Leader Handbook,* No. 34637A. The handbook also lists sources of more games.

Radioactive Field; Radioactive Field II; Blind Square; Line Up; Human Ladder; Blind Tent Pitch; Knots; Spider Web; All Aboard; Quicksand; The Reversing Pyramid; Gimme a Leg to Stand On; Popsicle Push-Up; The Great Egg Drop; Traffic Jam; Two by Four; Diminishing Load; Prouty's Landing; Trust Circle; People Pendulum; Group Juggling; People Pass; Everybody Up; Hog Call; Have You Done This?; Questions; Cookie Machine; Sardines; Blob Tag; British Bulldog; Caterpillar; Eeeny-Einy-Over; Flying Dutchman; Slaughter; Rock/Paper/Scissors; Walking Statues; Positive Reinforcement; Continuous Story; If You Love Me, Won't You Please, Please Smile?; Princess Uggawugga; Word Whiskers; Botticelli; Going to the Moon; Ghost; Hawaiian Hand Clap; Peek-a-Who Name Game; Wampum Name Game.

Character Education Activity

A character education activity is a particular type of problem-solving situation. It often is complex in nature and usually involves ethical issues. Because a character education activity is a problem-solving situation, it is important that post members employ empathy, invention, and selection when they think through their positions on the issues and work toward a solution. The following character education activities are available in *Character Education Activities,* No. 99-223:

Instructions for Character Education Activity; The Adversary System; Armtech Vendor; Can Food and Water Be Denied?; Censorship; Competition; Entrapment; Equipment Donation; Fast-Buck Freddy; Interracial Friendship; Marginal Chemical; Moonlighting; Paternalism; A Perfect Bust; Who Owns Your Knowledge?; Jobs Versus Birds; Capital Punishment; Not in My Backyard; E-Mail Etiquette; Loyalty to What?; Jury Duty; Animal Research; Quotas; Self-Defense; Sharon Overheard; Tainted Money; and The Morality of Wealth.

The character education activity encourages the development of the following personal skills:

1. Promoting productive conflict
2. Polite disagreement
3. Listening to new ideas
4. Understanding other people's perspectives
5. Working toward a solution that the group involved will support and implement

Why are character education activities so important? They're important because whether we know it or not, they're all around us, all the time. We have an ongoing potential for making decisions that affect the quality and value of our lives, the lives of others, and the world we live in.

CHARACTER EDUCATION FORUM

A character education forum, which could be held at a regular post meeting, is simply a more formal way of gathering information. One or more people who work in the special-interest area of your post are invited to speak to your post about character issues in the field. The members in your post can use the information gathered in a character education forum to help them develop their own career character education activities. (See the *Explorer Leader Handbook*, No. 34637A.)

REFLECTION

Reflection is looking back at experiences once they're over in order to understand what happened, and using this understanding in looking forward to the next action and new experiences. (See the *Explorer Leader Handbook,* No. 34637A.)

We facilitate reflection by asking questions that cause people to think, questions such as:

1. What happened in this activity?
2. Did you like what happened? Why or why not?
3. What did you like best (least) about what you did?
4. Did you learn anything? What?
5. Has this experience affected (changed) you in any way?
6. What kind of leader do you think you were?
7. How do you think the others perceived your leadership?
8. Would you do anything differently next time?

A good way to practice reflection is to start using it with initiative or cooperative games. Initiative games are activities in which the post is confronted with a specific problem to solve. Cooperative games are activities that emphasize participation, challenge, and fun.

MOMENTS IN COMMON

Moments in Common, No. AV-03V005, is a 24-minute film for post Advisors and other adults involved in Exploring. It carries a powerful message: Caring adults can make a difference in the lives of young people. The video is designed to help Advisors understand the potential of their relationships with young people in those significant ''moments in common'' shared in a program like Exploring. The training outline structures a one-and-a-half hour workshop for post Advisors, associate Advisors, and other adult leaders.